

Learn About Activists To Help Combat Negative Publicity

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Earlier this year, I attended an animal rights meeting. I have to be honest; I was impressed with the meeting, even though I didn't agree with all of the opinions that were presented.

First of all, if you think that the initiators of this movement are disorganized, think again. At this meeting, I learned how to get a message across to the public through the media, writing news releases, holding news conferences, radio and television interviews and talk shows. In addition, other methods of getting the message out were discussed. These included setting up tables, making displays, distributing leaflets and speaking at public meetings.

We also learned how to organize a public meeting, start a local group, organize a demonstration and run a campaign for animals. I learned some good ideas that I could put to use in my own position as an Extension agent, and I had felt fairly knowledgeable in this area!

This group was extremely well-organized and devoted to the cause of animal rights.

In the beginning of the seminar, the participants were introduced to the idea of cruelty-free living. This means that the individual adopts a lifestyle that does not include the "exploitation" of animals. This means that you do not eat animals or products derived from them, wear animals or use products tested on them or containing them. In addition, you should encourage others not to do

so either. Items to avoid included wool, leather, fur, down and even silk. We were told that silk was not O.K. because the silkworms were killed in the process of obtaining the silk.

From a dietary standpoint, participants were told about the vegan lifestyle. This diet excludes any animal products, even dairy products and eggs. The opposition to these products is in the way the animals are raised on "factory farms." We also were encouraged to educate ourselves by reading books written by some of the originators of the movement. Two books highly recommended were "Animal Liberation" by Peter Singer, an Australian philosopher, and "Diet for a New America" by John Robbins, of Baskin-Robbins fame. I currently have both of these books and have been reading

them to get a better perspective on this movement.

If anything bothered me during this meeting, it was the occasional inaccurate statement that was suggested by the presenters and the unwillingness to correct an inaccurate statement made by a participant. It seemed the presenters didn't want in any way to correct a mistake if it might look as if they were defending current systems.

We need to keep aware of this movement. The animal rights groups did not spring up because everything was dandy with the use of animals by humans. As far as this group is concerned there is no need to test products on animals, conduct research with animals, wear animals or eat animal products to remain healthy. I honestly believe that consumers will make the right choices in the end, pro-

vided we can assure them that the research and testing is needed and beneficial, that animals are not subjected to unnecessary pain and suffering, and that animals are treated humanely in research and on farms.

With all the negatives that these groups express, it's nice to know of a group that has been formed to counter some of the negative publicity of the animal rights movement. The group I'm referring to is the Incurably Ill for Animal Research. I hear that they are extremely effective in countering the animal rights groups.

When it's all said and done, most people realize the importance and necessity of using animals for the benefit of mankind. We still need to make sure we are practicing the best management procedures possible, and never sit back on our laurels and think that there isn't any room for improvement in our systems.

Additional research needs to be done to determine if current facilities and management procedures are best for our livestock. We need to constantly review our systems to insure the best care and housing possible. Only through research and education can we combat the negative impact of animal rightists.

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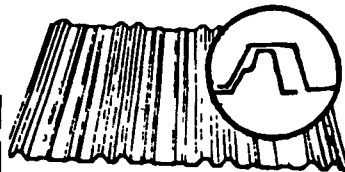
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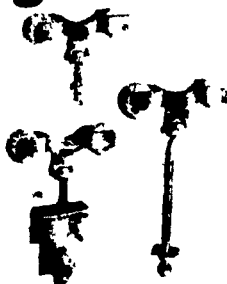
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